

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 2-15, 17 and 19-24 are considered in the Office action.

Claims 2-15, 17 and 19-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph for failure to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. In particular, the Office action states that the term “contiguous sidewall” in claims 21 and 23 are unclear because the claims do not state that with which the sidewall is contiguous.

Claims 2, 3, 17, 19-21 and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Yraceburu et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,409,332 (“Yraceburu”).

Claims 4-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Yraceburu.

Claims 22 and 24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Yraceburu in view of Ju U.S. Patent No. 5,806,992.

Reply

Applicants have amended claims 21 and 23 to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention. In particular, amended independent claim 21 recites an apparatus comprising: a vacuum table including a substantially flat top surface and a plurality of holes, each hole including a sidewall that extends to and is substantially perpendicular to the top surface and is in fluid communication with a vacuum source located within the vacuum table, a moveable transport belt disposed above the top surface of the vacuum table, the transport-comprising a plurality of holes extending through a thickness of the belt, and a substantially flat porous sheet disposed between the top surface of the vacuum table and the transport belt, wherein the vacuum generated by the vacuum table creates a suction on a substrate placed on the transport belt, and the porous sheet restricts fluid flow between the table and the transport belt. Amended independent claim 23 is a comparable method claim. Support for the claim amendments may be found in the specification at least at page 2, lines 14-23, page 3, lines 10-14 and lines 18-24, page 6, line 6 through page 7, line 3 and FIG. 2A (which illustrates holes 21 having sidewalls that extend to and are substantially perpendicular to a top surface of

vacuum table 22). Applicants respectfully submit that none of the cited references, alone or combined, describe or suggest the claimed invention.

Instead, Yraceburu describes an apparatus 10 that includes a vacuum box 307 having a lid 317 that is essentially an airflow filter. (Col. 5, lines 4-13 and lines 43-44). In particular, lid 317 is layered or graduated from a relatively porous coarse material 318 to a relatively dense fine material 323. (Col. 6, lines 6-10). Lid 317 functions to trap ink mist and paper dust, and provide flow restriction. (Col. 5, lines 38-65). A platen 311 is mounted atop lid 317, and includes an array of vacuum passageways, or ports, 315 distributed across the surface. (Col. 5, lines 16-17; Col. 6, lines 6-10; FIG. 3). A perforated transport belt 32 is disposed above platen 311, and is used to transport a paper sheet 16. (Col. 4, lines 16-17; Col. 5, lines 4-8; FIG. 3).

Unlike the claimed invention, Yraceburu does not describe or suggest a vacuum table including a substantially flat top surface and a plurality of holes, each hole including a sidewall that extends to and is substantially perpendicular to the top surface and is in fluid communication with a vacuum source located within the vacuum table, a moveable transport belt disposed above the top surface of the vacuum table, and a substantially flat porous sheet disposed between the top surface of the vacuum table and the transport belt.

In particular, although platen 311 has a top surface, Yraceburu does not describe or suggest anything disposed between the top surface of platen 311 and transport belt 32. Further, lid 317 does not include a substantially flat top surface and a plurality of holes, each hole including a sidewall that extends to and is substantially perpendicular to the top surface and is in fluid communication with a vacuum source. Indeed, Yraceburu does not describe, depict or suggest anything regarding coarse material 318 or fine material 323 including holes having sidewalls, let alone sidewalls that extend to and are substantially perpendicular to the top surface. Instead, to effectively trap ink mist and paper dust and provide flow restriction, it would seem that coarse material 318 and fine material 323 ideally would not include any holes having such sidewalls.

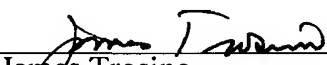
Because Yraceburu does not describe or suggest the claimed invention, applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 21 and 23 be withdrawn. Because all other claims depend from either claim 21 or 23, applicants further

respectfully request that the rejections of claims 2-15, 17, 19-20, 22 and 24 also be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, applicants submit that this application, including claims 2-15, 17 and 19-24, is allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner allow this application.

Respectfully submitted,



James Trosino
Registration No. 39,862
Attorney for Applicants